

Le Revue Jeu (Montréal Qc Canada)
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Animal : Crazy Fun at the Farm

It is with an infectious energy that the members of Cirque Alfonse enter the stage as if it were the catwalk of an enfant terrible of the fashion world. A frenzied musical score, some cheeky dance moves and deliciously kitsch outfits set the tone for the show as we the spectators of Animal are invited to a big party at a very special farm. Even if some of the acts that follow will prove to be of uneven interest, the atmosphere, the performances fueled by revamped traditional music that is performed live will remain pleasing from beginning to end.

The agricultural iconography is reflected in the props chosen: eggs are used in a Korean board juggling act, wheelbarrows are used in a hand-to-hand routine, while an entire choreography is built around forks and buckets of grain ... while some acrobatics are performed on a moving tractor tire. Milk cans also play a preponderant role since they serve as pedestals on which sometimes female circus artists perform hand to a hand balancing duet, while other times on which acrobats catch and throw oversized cowbells.

Some references to the farm bestiary are however less striking, such as the performance of a dancing cow (a circus artist wearing an inflatable costume) and Alain Carabinier's walk on stilts in front of a sheet metal wall behind which plastic chickens emerge on the to the tune of the Dance of the Ducks. We however welcome the return to the stage of this patriarch of the Carabinier-Lépine family. It is moving to see the septuagenarian perched at the top of a pole balanced on his son's shoulder, like a glorious Anchises carried by a proud Aeneas.

Another pole will give the audience the shivers. This one, also supported by the troop's carrier, but forming an angle of about 90 degrees (thus following the shape of the number seven), and whose horizontal part is equipped with straps, allows Justine Méthé-Crozat to perform a perilous and very original aerial exercise. On the evening of the media premiere, there were a few misfires (including a fall), but these setbacks only made the technical difficulties faced by the artists of Saint-Alfonse-Rodriguez more tangible. What further undermines the production, and more specifically its rhythm, are the transitional numbers (with the exception of a refreshingly choreographed jig involving the entire cast and crew, right down to the musicians), which struggle at times to captivate the audience.

Those who deplore the omnipresence of hand-to-hand (on milk cans, in wheelbarrows, on a board on a tube rolling on the ground, etc.), to the detriment of the other circus disciplines, will be consoled by the fact that the show concludes with a number built around a mechanical bull, whose highlight is undoubtedly the handling of the lasso by Antoine Carabinier-Lépine, standing on his iron mount. A final that allows to close Animal as it was started, with a touch of playfulness.